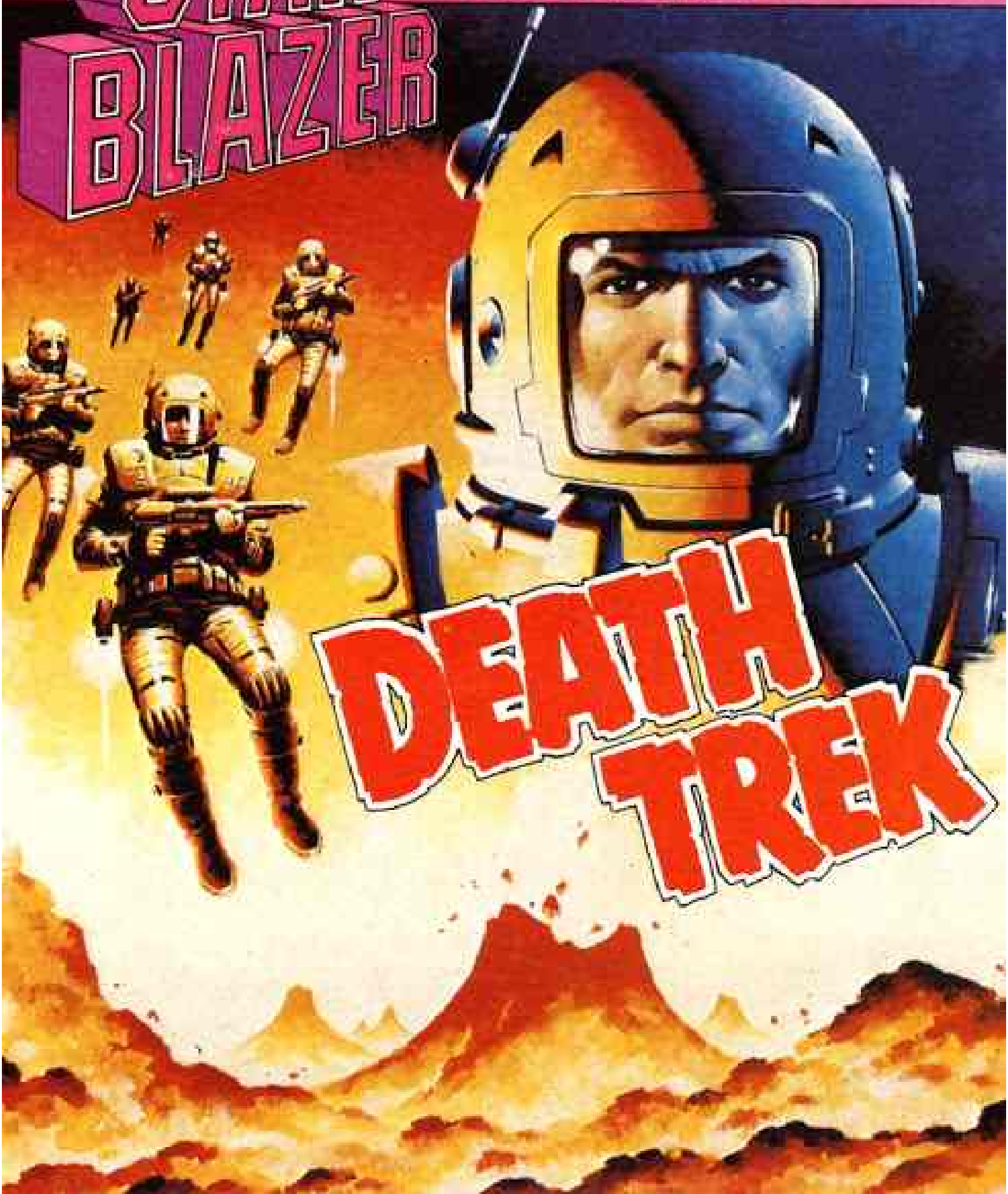
STAR BLAZER

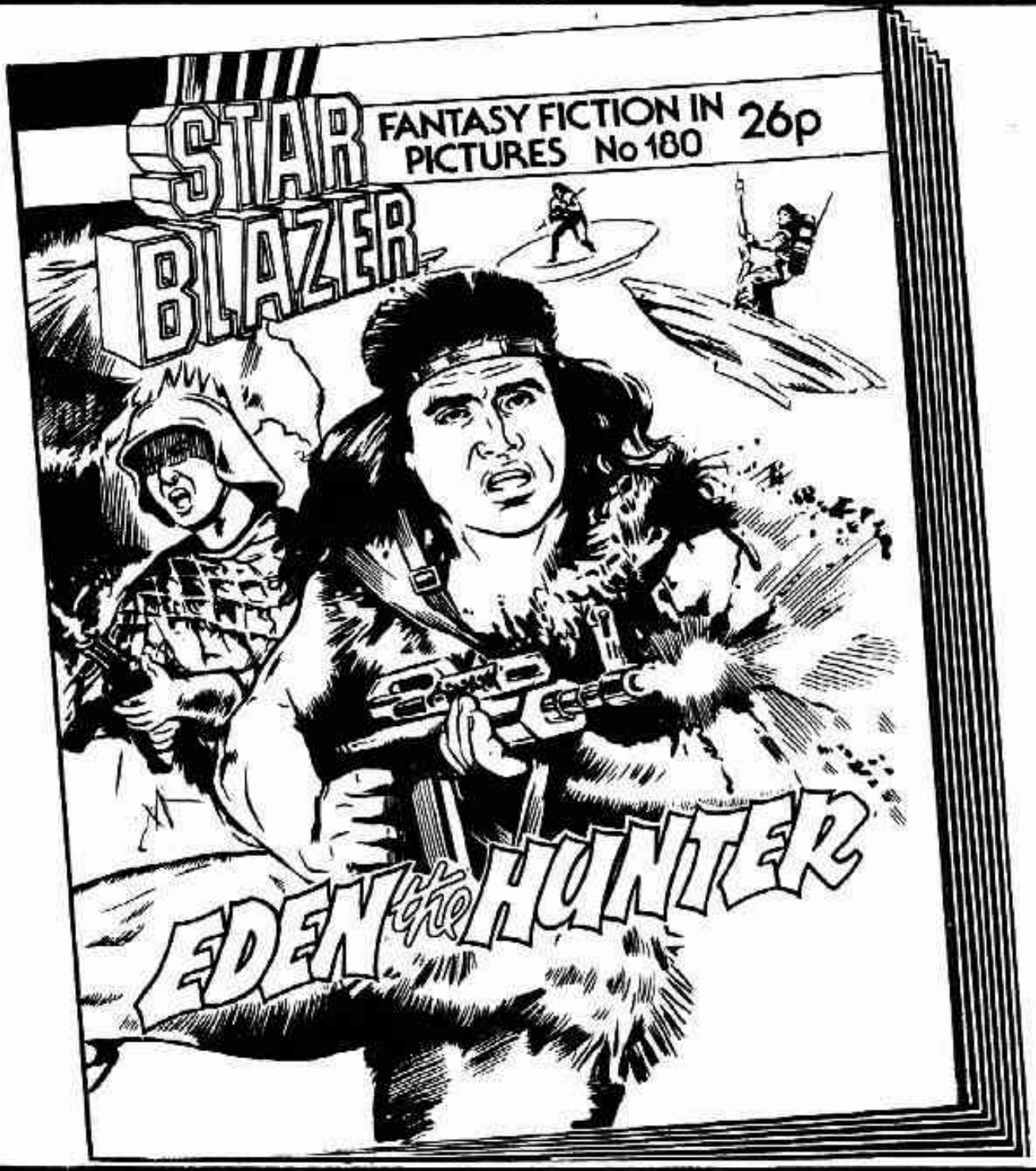
FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No 181

26p

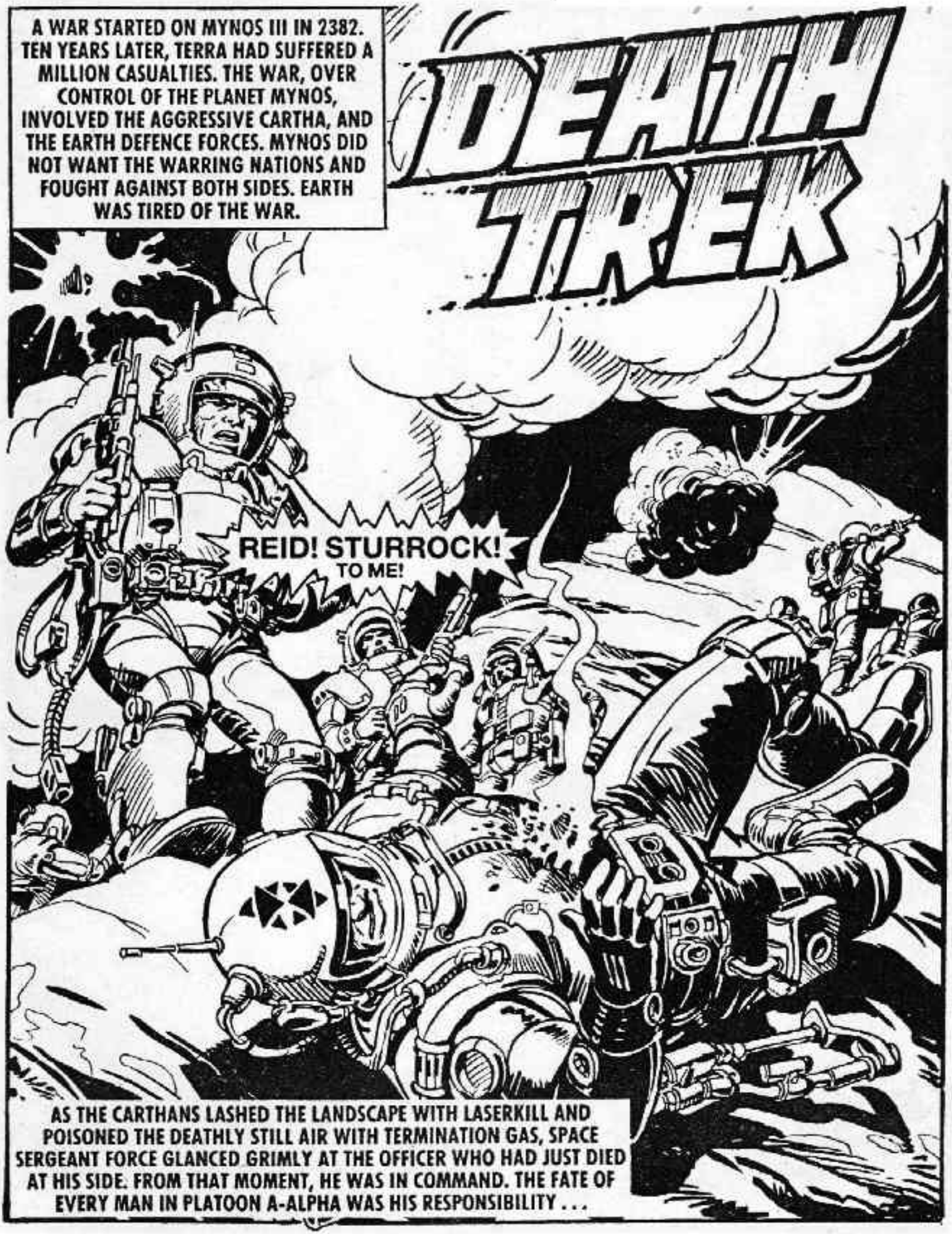


DEATH TREK

DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S *OTHER*



On sale at your newsagent's *NOW!*


A WAR STARTED ON MYNOS III IN 2382. TEN YEARS LATER, TERRA HAD SUFFERED A MILLION CASUALTIES. THE WAR, OVER CONTROL OF THE PLANET MYNOS, INVOLVED THE AGGRESSIVE CARTHA, AND THE EARTH DEFENCE FORCES. MYNOS DID NOT WANT THE WARRING NATIONS AND FOUGHT AGAINST BOTH SIDES. EARTH WAS TIRED OF THE WAR.
DEATH TREK
REID! STURROCK! TO ME!
AS THE CARTHANS LASHED THE LANDSCAPE WITH LASERKILL AND POISONED THE DEATHLY STILL AIR WITH TERMINATION GAS, SPACE SERGEANT FORCE GLANCED GRIMLY AT THE OFFICER WHO HAD JUST DIED AT HIS SIDE. FROM THAT MOMENT, HE WAS IN COMMAND. THE FATE OF EVERY MAN IN PLATOON A-ALPHA WAS HIS RESPONSIBILITY . . .

TELL THE MEN WE'RE GOING OVER THE TOP TO HIT THAT CARTHAN UNIT BEFORE IT HITS US!
WE CAN'T! THEY'D BURN US BEFORE WE'D GET TEN METRES!
DON'T ARGUE! IF YOU DON'T MOVE IN TWO SECONDS . . . I'LL BURN YOU MYSELF!
REID'S THROAT DRIED UP LIKE A SULPHUR BED. HIS VOICE CROAKED INTO HIS HELMET INTERCOM . . .
SECTION LEFT . . . SECTION RIGHT . . . ON THE CENTRE ADVANCE . . . RUN!

TURN THOSE LASERS ON FULL HEAT! MAKE THOSE ROCKS GLOW!

MORE SCARED OF FORCE THAN OF THE CARTHANS, THE PLATOON STUMBLED ACROSS THE IONIZED SOIL TO THE GLOWING RIM OF THE ENEMY TRENCH . . .
THUNDERPHASER . . . HUG MUD!

A THUNDERPHASER WAS A HAND THROWN DEVICE THAT DETONATED WITH VAST QUANTITIES OF ULTRASONIC ENERGY — STUN WAVES THAT IN AN INSTANT 'SHOOK' SOLID OBJECTS TO DUST!

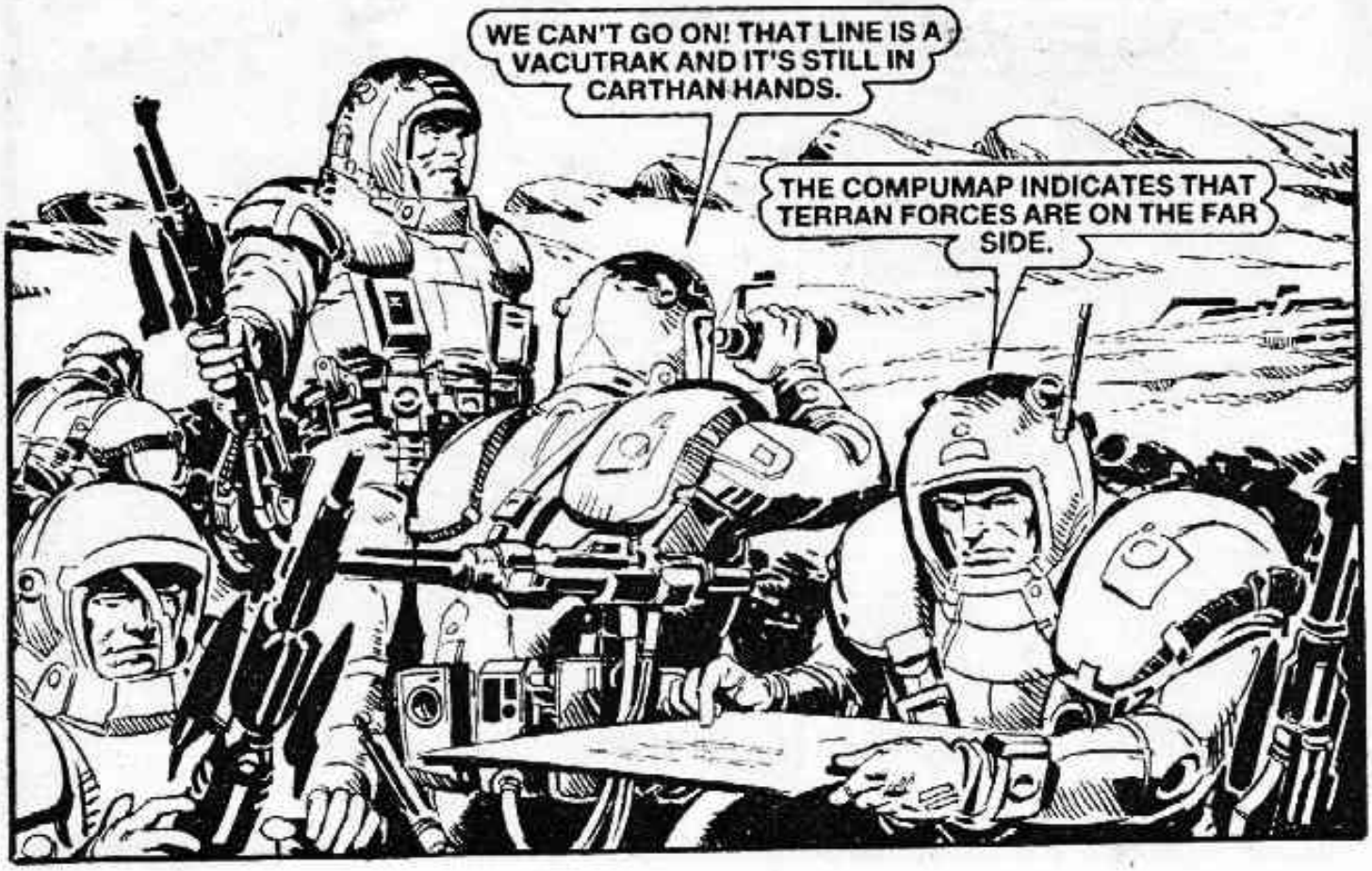
BUT ONE CARTHAN, WITH HIS BATTLE HELMET SWITCHED TO 'INTERCEPT' HAD HEARD AND HEEDED FORCE'S WARNING. AND HE WAS THE FIRST TO BREAK COVER . . .
DIE, EARTH SCUM!

HIS LASER BLASTER TARGETED REID. FORCE TARGETED THE CARTHAN, AND WAS THE FIRST TO FIRE!
WHAT THE . . .?

SARGE . . . THIS GUY'S WEARING A CAPTAIN'S SUIT.
WHAT?
WHY THE OVERKILL? HE WAS AS DEAD AS MOONROCK!
HIS RADIO PACK WAS ON 'TRANSMIT' . . . SENDING A SITUATION REPORT TO CARTHAN HQ. I SWITCHED IT OFF!

. . . BUT NOT BEFORE PART OF THE REPORT HAD BEEN RECEIVED.
COMMANDER SUPREMO! A TERRAN REMNANT HAS JUST ELIMINATED UNIT 7703. CAPTAIN NNGAR WAS PREPARING TO LEAD THEM IN A FINAL, VICTORIOUS ATTACK . . .
NNGAR . . .?
MY SON NNGAR . . . SO CLOSE TO VICTORY, KILLED BY A MUDCRUSTED TERRAN RABBLE!

PLATOON A-ALPHA SLOGGED ACROSS THE SILENT BATTLESCAPE FOR SEVERAL MILES, UNTIL . . .



AS FORCE PAUSED TO ASSESS THE SITUATION, A REARVIEW DEVICE ON HIS HELMET BUZZED AN ALARM IN HIS EAR, AND PROJECTED AN IMAGE ON HIS VISOR . . .
SOMEBODY HAS A LASER SIGHT ON ME!
PZZZ
FORCE'S REACTIONS WERE QUICK —
. . . BUT NOT NOW!
SERGEANT! TRANSIT BEAM MESSAGE FROM H.Q.!
READ IT!

ALL UNITS . . . WITHDRAWAL IMMEDIATE . . . RENDEZVOUS CO-ORDINATES 42014023. NO PICKUP AFTER TIME POINT 121200. MESSAGE ENDS.
WE'RE GOING HOME! THEY'VE GIVEN UP THE FIGHT. THAT GIVES US A LONG WALK IN A SHORT TIME. CAN YOU OPERATE A VACUTRAIN?
YES, SIR!

ONCE THEY HAD DESCENDED THE ESCARPMENT, FORCE REMOVED HIS BULKY JET PACK AND ORDERED PRIVATE LARSEN TO HAND OVER THE INFRASCAN . . . A DEVICE THAT COULD DETECT BODY HEAT, EVEN THROUGH WALLS, AND COMPUTE A TARGET COURSE FOR MISSILES . . .
BUT, SERGEANT, I'M TRAINED TO USE THIS . . .
NO DOUBT . . . BUT ARE YOU TRAINED TO DIE? YOU WOULDN'T GET NEAR ENOUGH TO USE IT. I MIGHT!

FORCE GHOSTED ACROSS THE BLEAK LANDSCAPE TO WITHIN A HUNDRED METRES OF THE WAYSTATION.
NONE OF US COULD'VE GOT THAT NEAR.
THE RECEIVER IS SET UP . . . MISSILE BATTERY ARMED.

AS FORCE FOCUSSED THE INFRASCAN ON THE WAYSTATION, HUMANOID HEAT SHAPES SHOWED UP ON THE TARGET GRID.
TARGET CODE FIVE FIVE.
LOCKED ON!

A CLUSTER OF NEUTRINO MISSILES LEAPT FROM THEIR LAUNCH TUBES . . .

OFF DUTY CARTHANS CHOKED ON THEIR MEAL . . .
GLUK . . .

. . . AND DIED WITH THEIR MOUTHS FULL AS NEUTRINO PARTICLES, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD, RIPPED LIKE SUB-ATOMIC DAGGERS THROUGH ALL LIVING MATTER!
FORCE CHECKED THE WAYSTATION . . .
CLEAR! GET DOWN HERE . . . FAST!
THERE'S A THROUGH-TRAIN TWO SECTIONS DOWN THE LINE. I CAN REPROGRAM IT FOR A TEN SECOND HALT . . .
DO THAT, REID! EVERYBODY ELSE . . . OUTSIDE, ON THE ROOF . . . WE'RE GONNA HITCH A RIDE!

IT'S UNMANNED! WE'LL BE SAFE ON THAT.
NOTHING'S SAFE IN THIS WAR. RADIOMAN . . . SWEEP THE CARTHAN CHANNELS. LISTEN FOR EXTRA SIGNAL TRAFFIC!
AS THE VACUTRAIN STOPPED AT THE STATION, THE TERRANS LEAPT ABOARD . . .
WE'VE TWO SECONDS . . . SO GET ON OR WAVE THE REST OF US 'GOODBYE'!

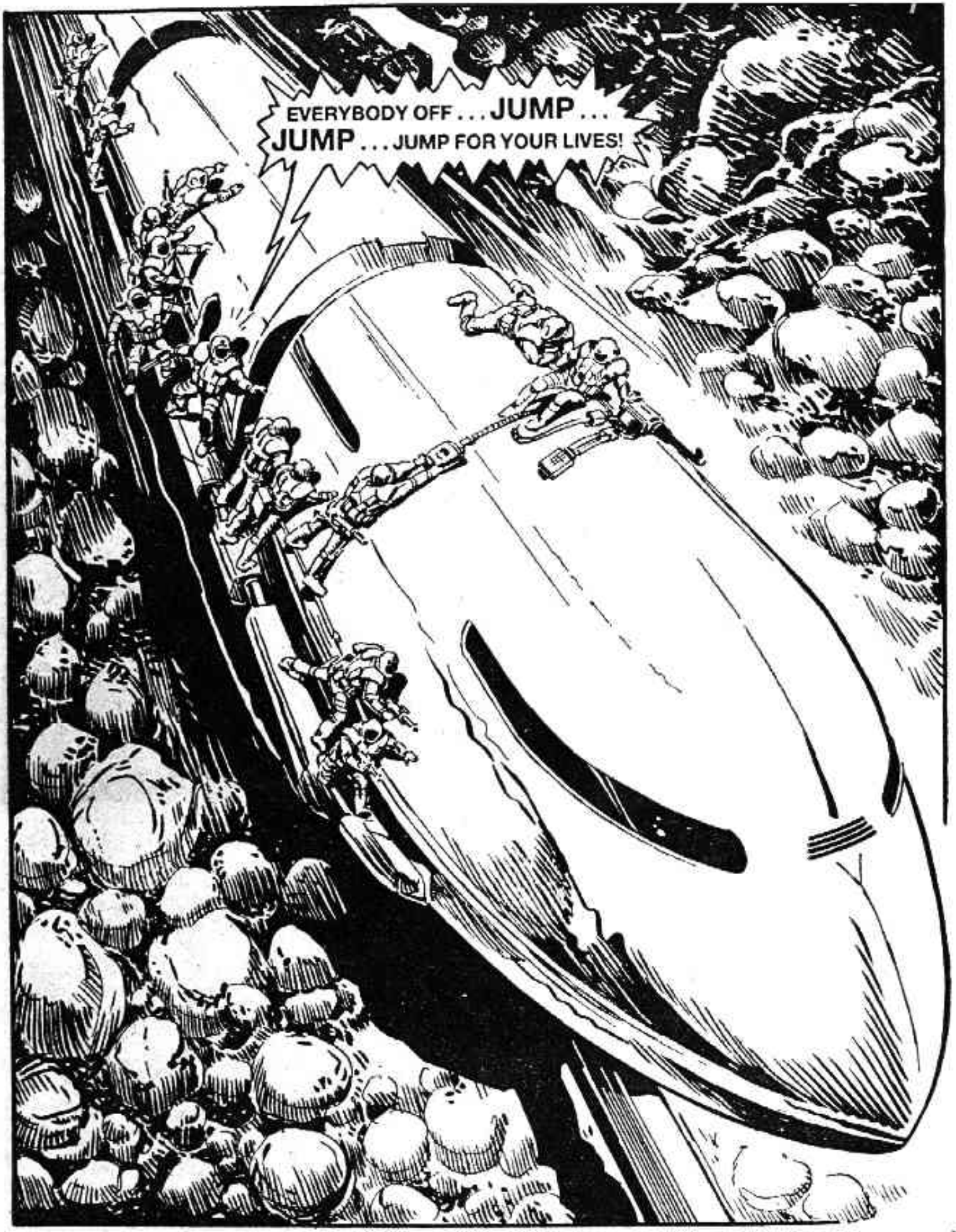
THE VACUTRAIN GATHERED SPEED . . .
THE CARTHANS ARE SUSPICIOUS. THEIR SUPREME HQ KEEPS ASKING THE WAYSTATION ABOUT THE UNSCHEDULED HALT THIS TRAIN MADE.
REID! TAKE TWO MEN! SET UP THE HEAVY POWER LASERGUN ON THE FRONT OF THIS TIN WORM!
COME WITH ME, STURROCK. WE'LL SEE IF WE CAN FORCE A WAY INSIDE THESE TRUCKS.
A SHOUT FROM RADIO MAN . . . HE THINKS THE CARTHANS ARE SETTING UP A FIRESTORM AMBUSH . . . TEN MILES AHEAD . . .
WE'LL HAVE BURNED OUR WAY INSIDE BY THEN!

FORCE USED A 'HOT ACID' CHARGE TO BURN A HOLE IN THE SIDE OF THE TRAIN.

DO WE GET INSIDE?

WAIT FOR IT, STURROCK!

THAT'S SEMI-LIQUID PROTON FUEL, THE MOST UNSTABLE FUEL KNOWN . . . ONE THUMP AND THAT LOAD WILL BLOW US AWAY AS PURE WHITE VAPOUR!


EVERYBODY OFF . . . JUMP . . .
JUMP . . . JUMP FOR YOUR LIVES!

EVERYONE HEARD THROUGH THEIR HELMET INTERCOMS, BUT REID DITHERED AND DELAYED.
IT'S MADNESS TO JUMP! WE'RE GOING TOO FAST!
JUMP, YOU FOOLS . . . JUMP!
THEY JUMPED—
WHAT'S HE TRYING TO DO, KILL US?

NOPE! WATCH!!

THE VACUTRAIN SPED INTO THE CARTHAN AMBUSH . . . AND BLEW UP AT THE FIRST SHOT.
FIRE!
WHUMP

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT THING, STURROCK?
I'VE COMPUTED OUR EASIEST ROUTE TO RV 42014023. I'VE CROSS CHECKED WITH LATEST DATA UPDATE FROM HQ . . . WE STRIKE EAST ON ROUTEWAY SIX, THEN . . .

THAT'S HOW THE CARTHAN'S KNEW WE HIT THE WAYSTATION, AND JUMPED THE VACUTRAIN. THEY'VE GOT AN 'INTERCEPT' ON THAT COMPUMAP MACHINE!

AT CARTHAN SUPREME HQ . . .
WE KNOW THEIR ROUTE, SUPREMO. WE CAN KILL THEM ANY TIME WE LIKE.
MANY MILES AWAY, FORCE VENTED HIS ANGER—
YOU'VE BLOWN THE EASY WAY, STURROCK. OUR ONLY WAY NOW, IS THE HARD WAY!
THE EASY ROUTE WILL BE QUICKER . . . WE CAN GIVE IT A TRY?
IF WE GET IT WRONG ONCE . . . WE'RE ALL DEAD MEN, AND DEAD MEN DON'T GO HOME. MAKE READY YOUR JET-PACKS!

JETPACKS ARE FOR EMERGENCY USE. ARE WE IN THAT MUCH TROUBLE?
WE WERE IN TROUBLE THE DAY TERRA LANDED ON THIS PLANET! MAYBE . . . WE HAVE TO GET AWAY FROM HERE QUICKLY.

PLATOON A — ALPHA SKIMMED OVER THE FRINGE OF THE ZAVA PLANUM-DESERT LIKE A SWARM OF ANGRY FIRE-TAILED BEES. THEY HEADED INTO THE SULPHUR LANDS . . .

THE SMALL FUEL TANKS DID NOT BURN FOR LONG, BUT LONG ENOUGH TO TAKE THE PLATOON A GOOD DISTANCE.
OKAY? WE'VE USED THESE KITS TO TRAVEL FAST, NOW GET DOWN THERE AND DUMP THEM SO THAT WE CAN TRAVEL LIGHT! CLOSE DOWN YOUR HELMETS BEFORE YOU CHOKE TO DEATH!

MEANWHILE, ON ROUTEWAY SIX, THE SPOT WHERE THE PLATOON JETPACKED AWAY FROM—
ROUTEWAY PATROL TO SURPREMO HQ . . . NO TERRANS DETECTED! SEND OUT A SPYGLOBE.
KEEP TO THE ROUGH GROUND!
WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING THE HARD WAY?
ONE OF THE MEN TOOK A SHORTCUT OVER FLAT GROUND . . . AND FELL IN.
THAT'S WHY, DODO! FLAT AREAS ARE SULPHUR CRUST, NOT TO BE TRUSTED! GET HIM OUT!

SUDDENLY THE SPYGLOBE APPEARED—
LOOK AT THAT . . .
. . . THEY'RE ON TO US!
FORCE FIRED, BUT IT SIMPLY SLID OUT OF AIM . . .
THAT BEAUTY'S TOO SMART TO GET HIT!

IT'S COMING BACK AT US!
WHAT'LL WE DO?
GIVE ME THAT FIRE CONTROL UNIT!
FORCE SIGHTED ON THE SHIMMERING GLOBE AND LAUNCHED A HUNTER MISSILE . . .
LET'S SEE YOU BOUNCE AWAY FROM THIS ONE!
THE HUNTER MISSILE TRACKED ITS TARGET BY SIGHT. IT DID NOT GET LOST . . . IT DID NOT GIVE UP . . . IT NEVER MISSED!

IT'S A CARTHAN PATROL MODULE.
TH-THAT MEANS THAT THEY'VE FOUND US AGAIN!

YES AND NO . . . THEY HAVE FOUND WHERE WE WERE, KEEP ON THE MOVE, AND THEY'LL LOSE US AGAIN!

THAT MACHINE WAS MEANT TO DELAY US UNTIL THE MAIN BODY OF CARTHANS REACHED US. WITH A BIT OF LUCK WE WON'T MEET THEM!

THE PLATOON STAGGERED ON, STUMBLING THROUGH THE ROARING SULPHUR LANDS UNTIL THEY WERE ENCRUSTED WITH ITS YELLOW RIME. AT LAST THE GURGLINGS AND SPLUTTERINGS OF THE GROUND DIED AWAY AND THEY ENTERED A LACEWORK FOREST OF SILENT SALINE TOWERS AND HUSHED ARCHWAYS . . .

IT'S QUIET, SERGEANT. LIKE A CATHEDRAL IN HERE!

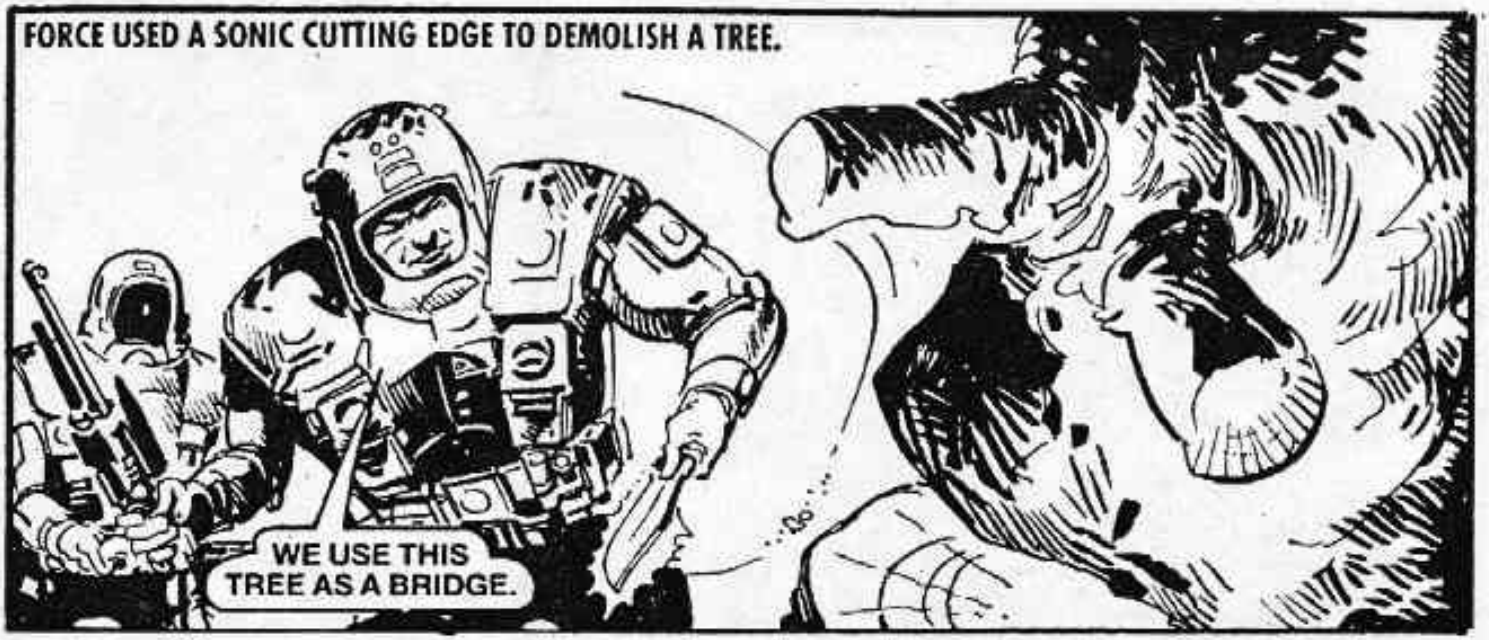
ALL NEGATIVE!
WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED! CHECK AGAIN!
HE'S GETTING JUMPY!
FORCE FIRED A PIN-HEAD ROCKET UP THROUGH THE BRITTLE TRACERY OF BRANCHES. IT WAS TOO SMALL TO BE SEEN BY DISTANT OBSERVERS . . .
. . . BUT IT COULD OBSERVE, AND REPORT BACK, BY ITS HAIR-THIN CONNECTING WIRE, ALL THAT IT COULD SEE.
THAT'S IT! LET'S MOVE — FAST!

FORCE HAD SEEN A 'SNIFFER', WITH NO BODY HEAT TO REGISTER ON INFRASCAN. IT MOVED ON A SELF-LAID TRACK OF SILVERY FOAM WHICH MUFFLED MOVEMENT OVER THE GROUND, AND THE FLAT PROFILE MADE IT HARD TO SEE AS IT CREPT ALONG BELOW EVERY RADAR-LASER HORIZON.

SOME TIME LATER . . .
THERE'S THAT TREE AGAIN! HE'S LED US AROUND IN A CIRCLE!
THE SERGEANT HAS FLIPPED . . .

FORCE HIT THE MAN WHO HAD SPOKEN.
SERGEANT . . . THAT WAS OUT OF ORDER.

SHEESH! NO, IT WASN'T!
KEEP OUT OF THAT SLIME, LASLO! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THAT SALT SQUIRREL!

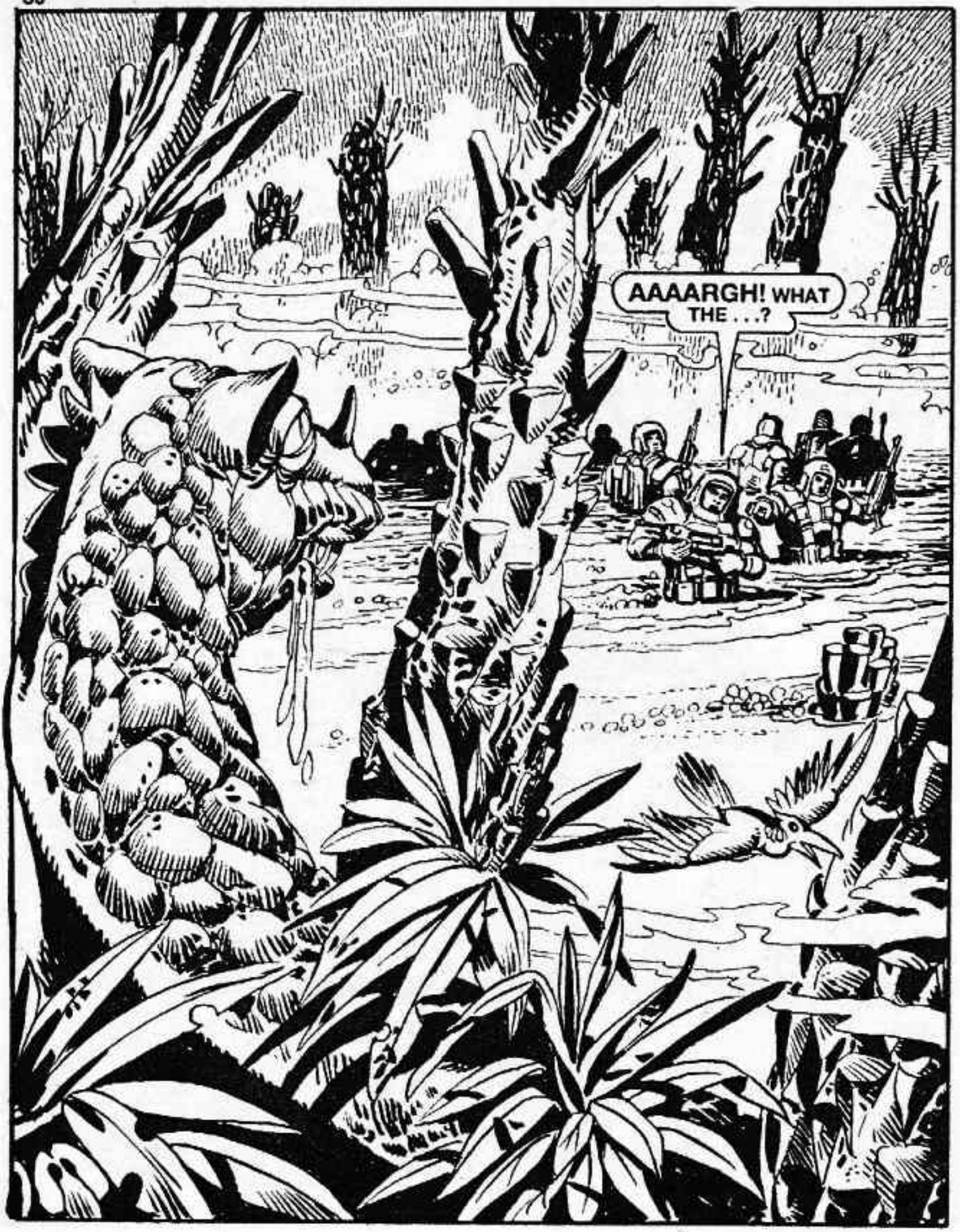

FORCE USED A SONIC CUTTING EDGE TO DEMOLISH A TREE.
WE USE THIS TREE AS A BRIDGE.

WON'T THE THING STILL FOLLOW US?
IT'LL TRY. WHY DO YOU THINK I WALKED YOU IN A CIRCLE?

FORCE WAS THE LAST MAN TO CROSS. HE SHATTERED THE TREE BEHIND HIM, KNOWING THAT THE 'SNIFFER' COULD NOT CROSS ITS OWN TRACK OF CORROSIVE SLIME. TRAPPED INSIDE ITS OWN DEADLY CIRCLE, THE SNIFFER WAS NO LONGER A PROBLEM.

BEYOND THE STRANGE FOREST LAY A GREAT SWAMP, SUCH AS WOULD HAVE BEEN FOUND ON SOL III ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION YEARS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE TERRAN RACES. PLATOON A-ALPHA MASTERED THE OOZE BY INFLATING THE PONTOON RIMS OF THEIR COMBAT BOOTS . . .
THIS IS FASCINATING.
FOOL! THIS ISN'T A GUIDED TOUR! KEEP MOVING AND KEEP QUIET!

THE CARTHANS ARE OUT TO GET US! THEY'VE GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE SO FAR. DON'T THINK THEY'VE GIVEN UP WATCHING AND LISTENING!


AAAARGH! WHAT THE . . .?

DON'T SHOOT THAT THING . . . UNLESS YOU WANT US ALL KILLED!
IT'S HARMLESS . . . LOOK!
TRANSIT SIGNAL VIA TERRAN SATELLITE . . . BEAMED DIRECTLY TO US!
THE CRACK-DOMED FOOLS! THEY'VE AS GOOD AS TOLD THE CARTHANS WHERE TO FIND US!

THE MESSAGE INFORMED PLATOON A-ALPHA THAT THEY HAD BEEN ALLOTTED A 12 SEAT TRANSPORTER AT THE EVACUATION POINT . . .
A TWELVE SEAT TRANSPORTER. EIGHTEEN OF US HERE. SIX OF US WILL HAVE TO CANCEL OUR RESERVATIONS!
. . . BUT, WHO?
DON'T WORRY, BOY — YOU'RE GOING HOME. WE MAY NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT WHO STEPS DOWN BY THE TIME WE REACH THE TRANSPORTER!

THERMAL MISSILE ATTACK! TAKE COVER . . .
THE ONLY SHELTER WAS UNDER THE TREE ROOTS . . .
AND KEEP COOL . . . THOSE MISSILES ARE HEAT SEEKERS!

A DOZEN THERMAL MISSILES SPLASHED INTO THE GREEN SWAMP AND THE COLD-BLOODED DINOSAUR WATCHED AND VAGUELY WONDERED . . .
ONE MAN BLUNDERED INTO A WATER LIZARD!
NO . . . NO . . .

A HEAT-SEEKING BOMB FOUND THE MAN, AND KILLED THEM BOTH!
HE PANICKED! THAT LIZARD WAS AS HARMLESS AS HIS OWN SHADOW!
NO ONE MENTIONED OUT LOUD THAT THERE WERE NOW ONLY FIVE MEN TOO MANY FOR THE TRANSPORTER!

HERE COMES THE CARTHAN CAVALRY . . . TO FINISH OFF THOSE OF US WHO SURVIVED THE BOMBING!
DO WE STAY AND FIGHT?

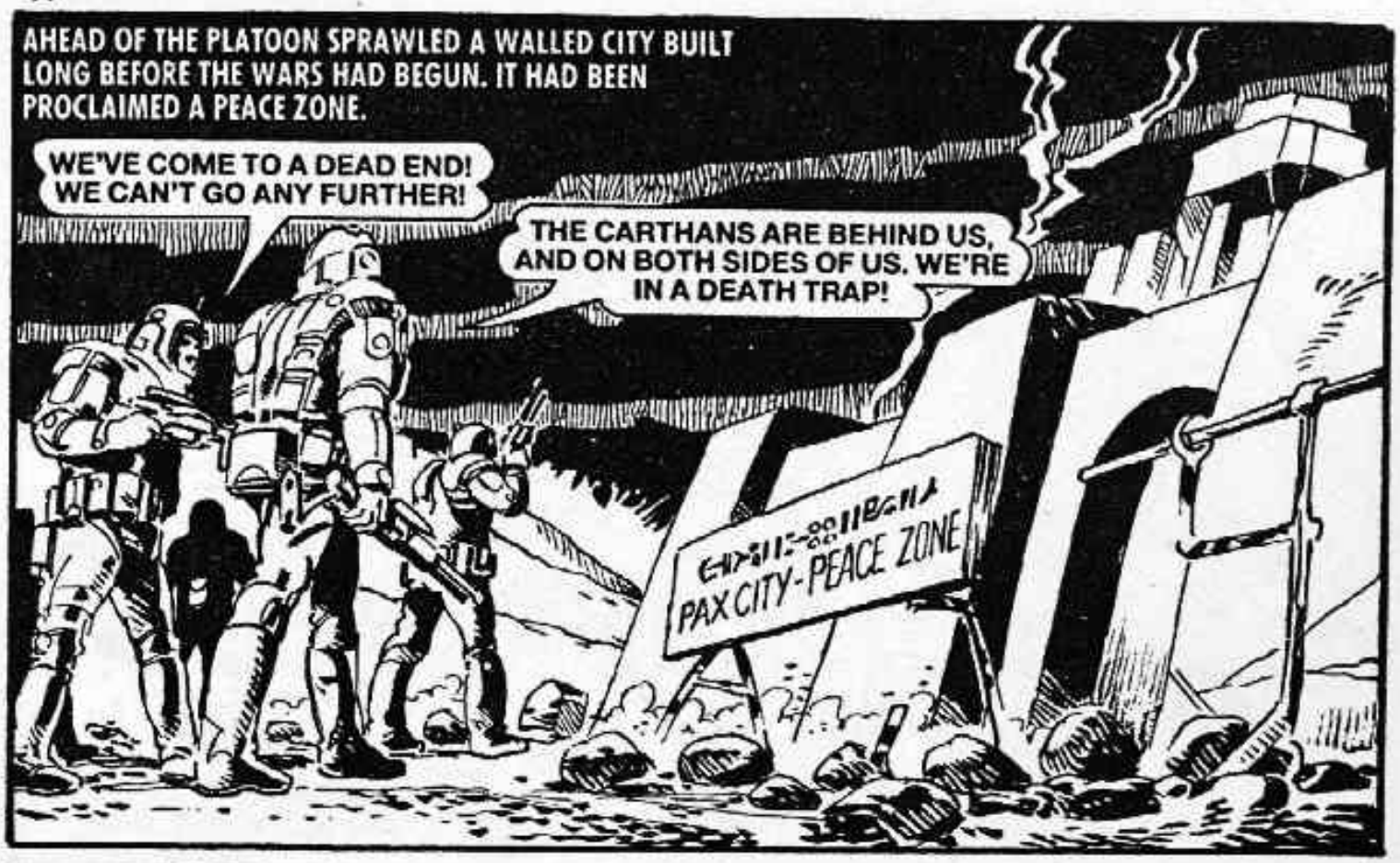
FOR AN ANSWER, FORCE RIPPED OPEN A MAN'S PACK AND TOOK OUT HALF A DOZEN SMOKEFLOATS . . .

WE MOVE . . . AND LET THEM DO ALL THE FIGHTING!

THE FLOATS THAT FORCE HAD RELEASED USED THEIR OWN SMOKE AS PROJECTION SCREENS . . . SHOWING COMBAT TERRANS! THE CARTHANS WERE FOOLED!

ATTACK THEM!

SUDDENLY THERE WAS SCREECHING MAYHEM!
IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH THE CARTHANS HAVE DISCOVERED POOR OLD DINO!
SCREECH
AND PRETTY NASTY WHEN ANNOYED.
THE MEN CRAWLED FROM THE SWAMP, EXHAUSTED.
SHALL I CHECK THE INFRASCAN FOR CARTHANS?
DON'T BOTHER, STURROCK . . .
WE CAN SEE THEIR SMOKE TRAILS, NEAR THEIR ARMOURED CRAWLER TRACKS. THEY'RE SO CLOSE I CAN ALMOST SMELL 'EM!

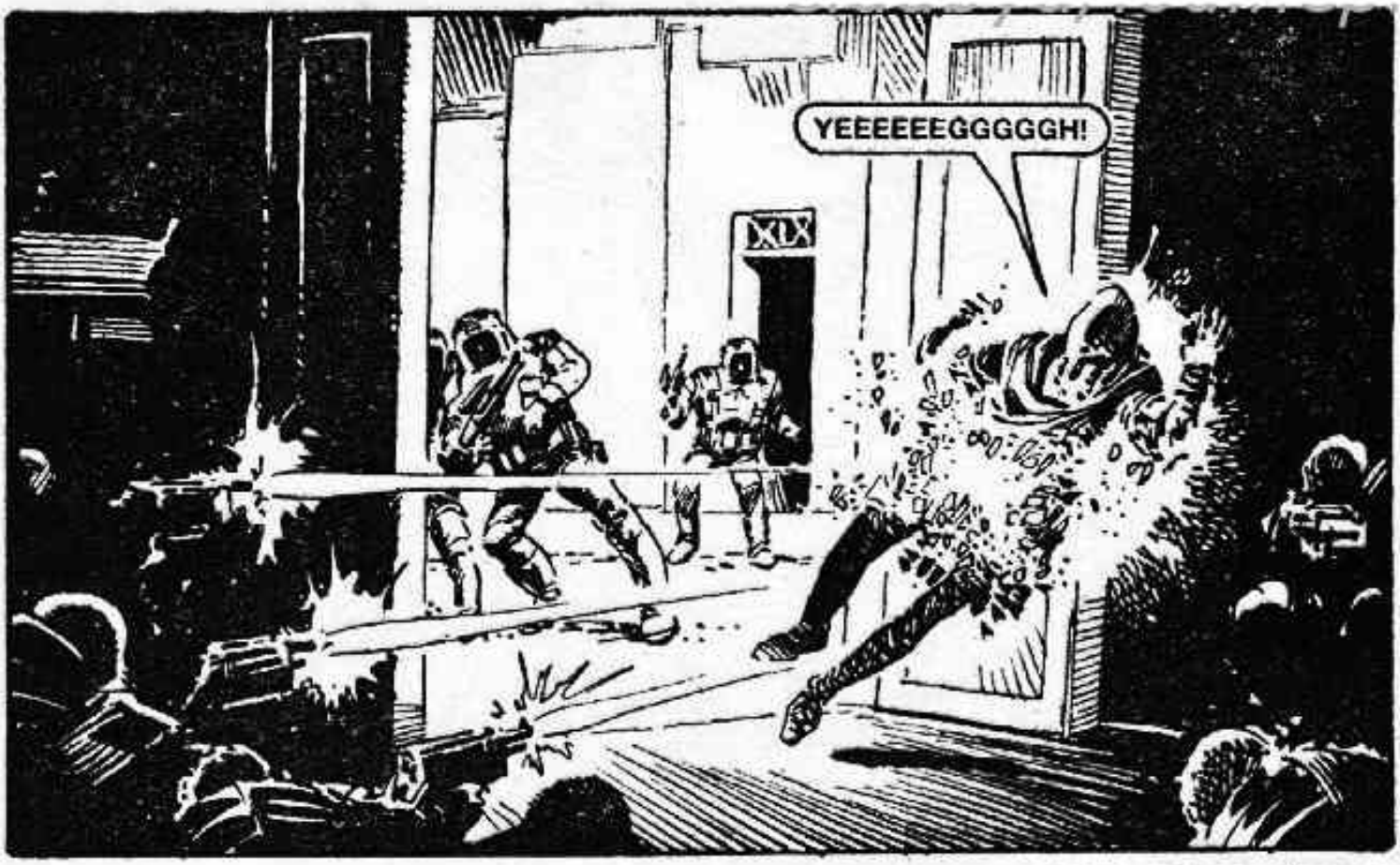

AHEAD OF THE PLATOON SPRAWLED A WALLED CITY BUILT LONG BEFORE THE WARS HAD BEGUN. IT HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED A PEACE ZONE.
WE'VE COME TO A DEAD END! WE CAN'T GO ANY FURTHER!
THE CARTHANS ARE BEHIND US, AND ON BOTH SIDES OF US. WE'RE IN A DEATH TRAP!
PAX CITY-PEACE ZONE

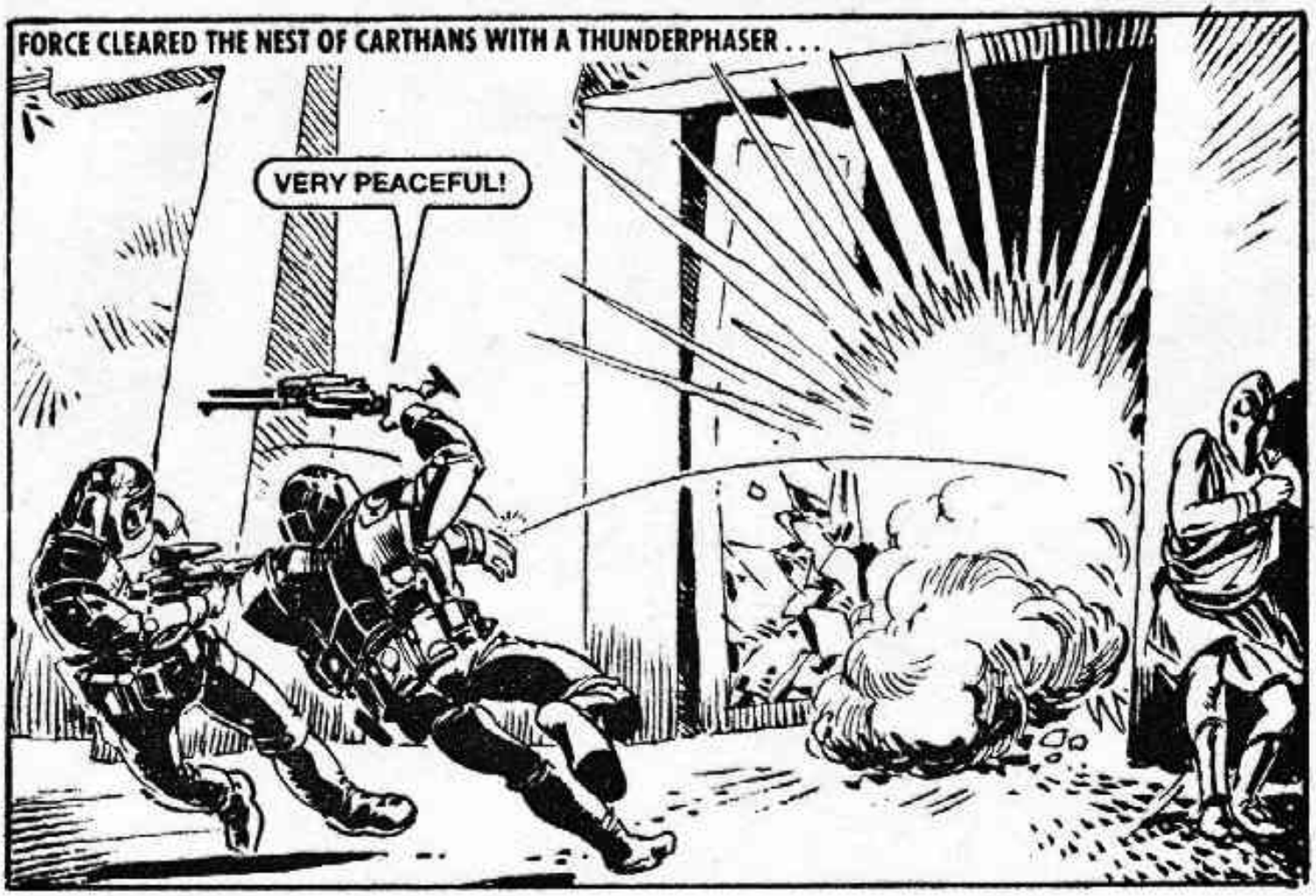
WE'RE HEAVILY ARMED — NOT EXACTLY PEACEFUL.
WE'RE TRYING TO GET OURSELVES OFF THIS PLANET. WHAT COULD BE MORE PEACEFUL THAN THAT?
PAX CITY-PEACE ZONE

THE GATES OPENED BEFORE THEM. SMILING MYNOS CITIZENS MADE GESTURES OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP . . .
WELCOME TO OUR CITY! COME, REST AND EAT!
LARSEN, TURN THAT INFRASCAN 'ON'!
B-BUT . . .
THAT'S AN ORDER!
PLEASE . . . ENTER OUR HALL OF WELCOME! FOOD AWAITS YOU . . .
THEY WERE EXPECTING US?

FORCE CHECKED THE INFRASCAN . . .
THERE'S MORE THAN FOOD WAITING IN THERE FOR US!

TAKE A LOOK, MY FRIEND THE MYNOS!
NO . . . PLEASE . . .


YEEEEEEGGGGGH!


FORCE CLEARED THE NEST OF CARTHANS WITH A THUNDERPHASER . . .
VERY PEACEFUL!

MOVE ON . . . DOUBLE FILE INTO THE CITY . . . GO!

THE CHARGE WAS SHORT-LIVED. ONE MAN WAS CUT DOWN BY A LASER HIDDEN IN AN ALLEY. TWO OTHERS ESCAPED WITH FLESH BURNS.
THERE'S A CARTHAN CRAWLER BLOCKING THE MAIN STREET!
THERE'S ANOTHER! WE'RE SURROUNDED!
SO MUCH FOR THIS BEING A PEACE ZONE!

FORCE ORDERED THE USE OF CLIMBING GRAPNELS . . .
OVER THE TOP!
THE LASER CLIMBING BEAMS HELD FIRM—
MY SECTION WILL CLEAR THE ROOF, SERGEANT . . .
FORGET THE ROOF, STURROCK . . . THEY'D OVERFLY US WITH THEIR JETPACKS . . .

FORCE BLASTED A WALL OPEN—
RIGHT, GET IN THERE . . . I'LL COVER!

WE GO THROUGH THIS BUILDING . . . AND OUT INTO THE NEXT!
'SCUSE US, FOLKS!
THESE TOURISTS ARE A NUISANCE.

THERE HAD BEEN CASUALTIES IN THE FIREFIGHT, BUT NOW THE OTHERS WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL OUT OF SIGHT OF THE RUTHLESS CARTHANS WHO HAD LAIN IN WAIT FOR THEM.
HOW DO WE GET OUT OF THIS PLACE?
A LOT SWIFTER THAN THE WAY WE CAME IN. DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH ON QUESTIONS . . . OR MINE ANSWERING!

USING PLASTI-STEEL LINE THEY TRAVELLED AT SPEED, A HUNDRED FEET OR MORE ABOVE STREET LEVEL . . .

LOOK OUT! HE'S CUTTING THE GRAPNEL!

DIE, TERRAN SCUM!

THIS WAY!
FORCE AND HIS SQUAD FOUND THEMSELVES ON A BALCONY.
HOW DO WE GET ACROSS THAT?
WE SHOULD'VE SAVED OUR JETPACKS.
ZIP IT YOU TWO!
BEG PARDON!

THE BUILDING TREMBLED WITH A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS.
THEY'RE DEMOLISHING THE BUILDING . . . RIGHT UNDER OUR FEET!
USE YOUR PARABLADES!

THE FOLDING PARABLADES HAD NO POWERDRIVE, BUT THEY ROTATED FREELY AS THEIR WEARER DROPPED THROUGH THE AIR, SLOWING HIS FALL LIKE A PARACHUTE.
THERE'S A SHELF THIRTY METRES FROM THE RIMROCK. MAKE FOR THAT!

BUT TWO OF THE PLATOON DID NOT MAKE IT. THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONTROL THEIR DIRECTION AND RATE OF DESCENT.
WHAT'S AT THE BOTTOM?
NO ONE KNOWS! IT'S TOO DEEP FOR ANYONE TO HAVE FOUND OUT — AND LIVED!

THIRTEEN MEN CROWDED THE ROCK SHELF . . .
THAT'S THE WAY AHEAD, MEN . . . TO THE RENDEZVOUS AND THE TRANSPORTER HOME!
. . . A TRANSPORTER THAT WOULD TAKE TWELVE!

FORCE TURNED TO THE MAN WHO CARRIED TWO LENGTHS OF PIPE CLAMPED TO HIS STANDARD ISSUE EQUIPMENT.

HAND OVER THE BROOMSTICK, TOMO! I'M GOING ACROSS!

JUST YOU? WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US? I SHOULD BE THE ONE . . .

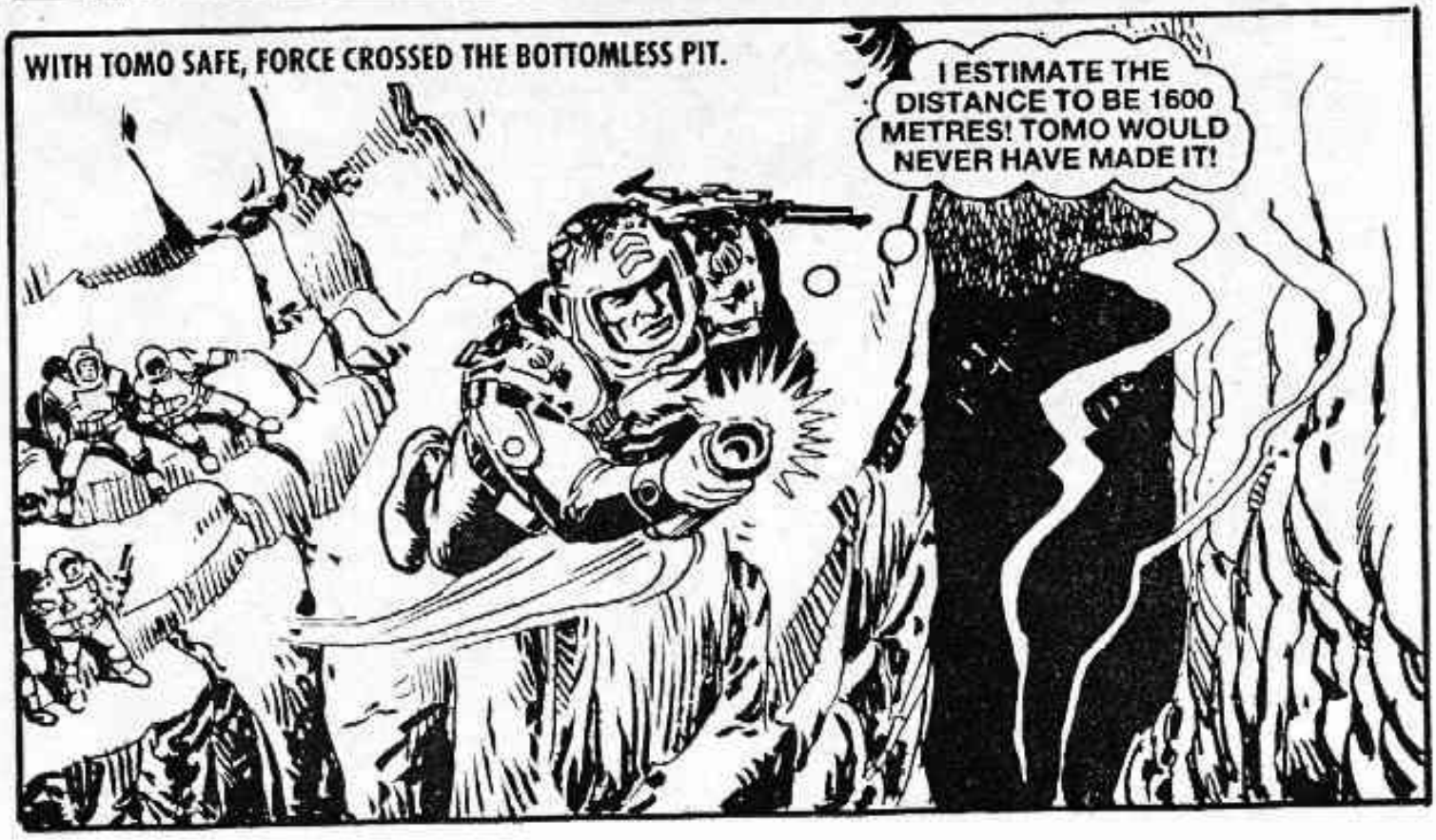
THE 'BROOMSTICK' WAS A SHORT RANGE ROCKET, CAPABLE OF CARRYING A MAN FIFTEEN HUNDRED METRES . . . UNDER FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS!

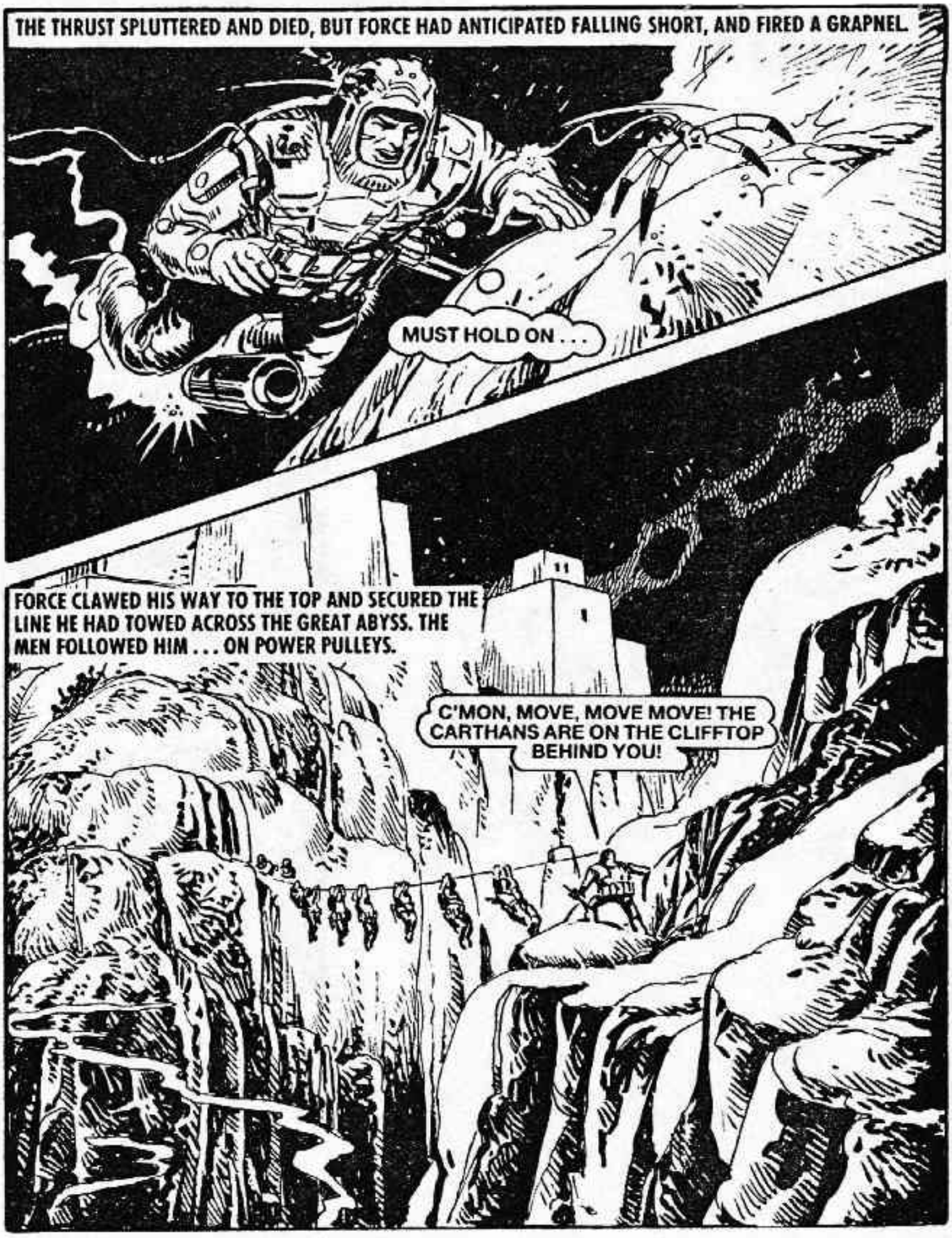
YOU'D BE THE ONE TO DROP INTO THE ABYSS! THE PLATOON NEEDS A MAN ON THE FAR SIDE!

NO! IT'S MY RESPONS . . . AAAHH!

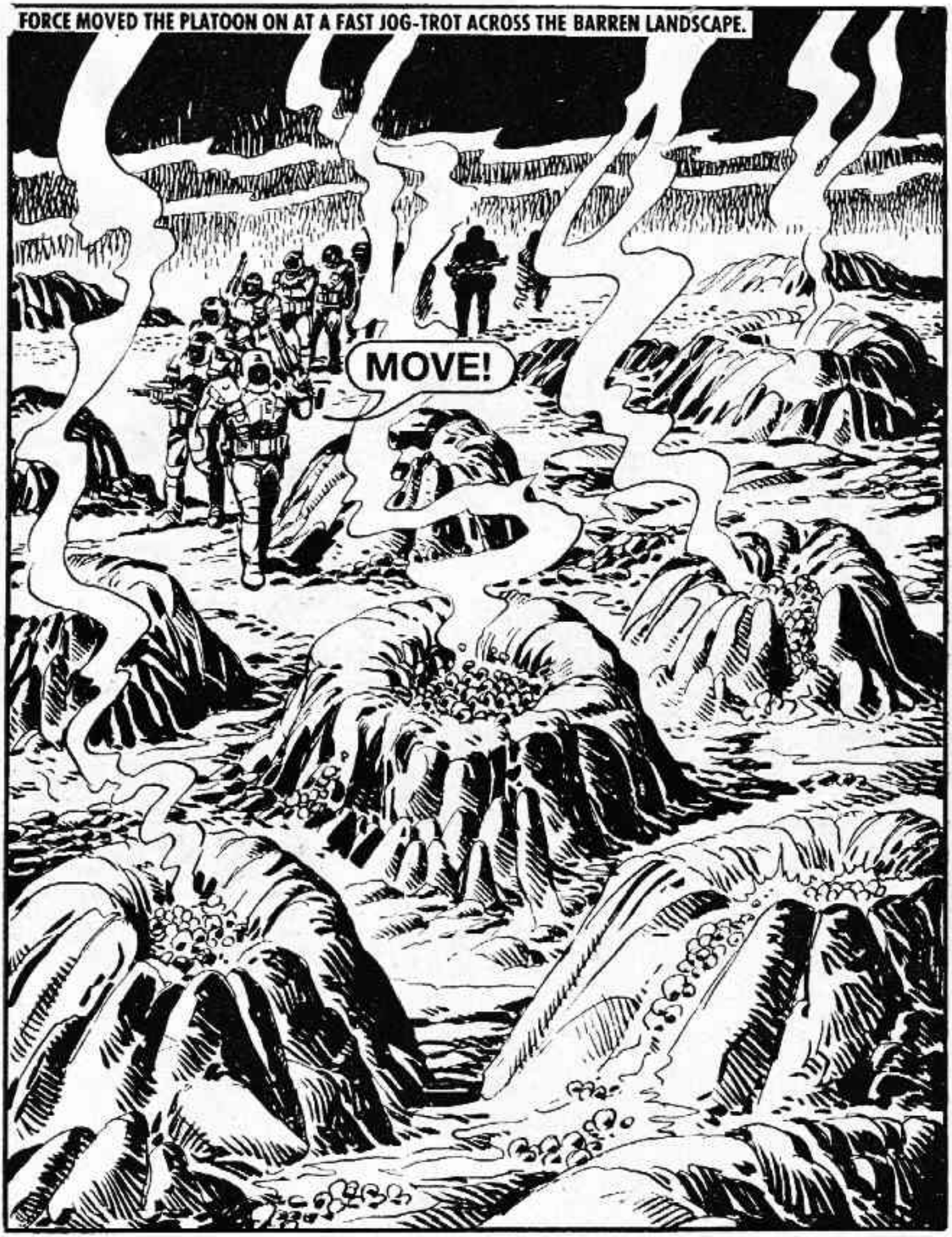
TOMO STUMBLED, RIGHT INTO THE ABYSS . . .

BUT FORCE WAS QUICK ENOUGH TO CATCH HIM.
GIVE ME THE BROOMSTICK . . . AND ZIP YOUR LIP!


WITH TOMO SAFE, FORCE CROSSED THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.
I ESTIMATE THE DISTANCE TO BE 1600 METRES! TOMO WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE IT!


THE THRUST SPLUTTERED AND DIED, BUT FORCE HAD ANTICIPATED FALLING SHORT, AND FIRED A GRAPNEL.
MUST HOLD ON . . .
FORCE CLAWED HIS WAY TO THE TOP AND SECURED THE LINE HE HAD TOWED ACROSS THE GREAT ABYSS. THE MEN FOLLOWED HIM . . . ON POWER PULLEYS.
C'MON, MOVE, MOVE MOVE! THE CARTHANS ARE ON THE CLIFFTOP BEHIND YOU!

FORCE CLEARED THE FAR CLIFFTOP WITH THE LAST SHOTS FROM THEIR HEAVY LASER GUN.
IONIZED ROCKS SPLIT AND CRUMBLED, AND TWO OF FORCE'S MEN FELL, RIPPING OUT THE END OF THE CABLE.
TWO MEN SMASHED INTO THE ROCKFACE . . .
THEIR HELMETS AND VISORS ARE SMASHED . . .
HAUL THEM UP!


FORCE MOVED THE PLATOON ON AT A FAST JOG-TROT ACROSS THE BARREN LANDSCAPE.
MOVE!

THERE WAS MUCH ACTIVITY AT CARTHAN SUPREME HEADQUARTERS . . .

THE TERRANS ARE DISMANTLING THEIR DEFENCES AROUND THE TRANSPORTER ZONE. MOST UNITS HAVE LEFT. WE HAVE SEVERAL LOBOTOMY SQUADS IN POSITION.

ALPHA PLATOON . . . WHAT OF THAT?

IT WON'T ARRIVE IN TIME. EVERYONE OF THEM WILL BE LEFT BEHIND.

THEN I SHALL GO TO THE TRANSPORTER ZONE . . . TO WITNESS THE DEATH OF THE TERRANS WHO KILLED MY SON!

PLATOON A-ALPHA WAS LESS THAN HALFWAY ACROSS THE CRATERED WILDERNESS WHEN . . .

WE NEED RE-INFORCEMENTS HERE, SERGEANT! DEPLOY YOUR MEN ON THE LEFT FLANK AND AWAIT FURTHER ORDERS!

GO TO HADES!

MY PLATOON HAS HAD ENOUGH . . . THEY'RE GOING HOME.
GET THE MEN TO DOWN VISORS, AND WHEN I GIVE THE WORD, YOU KILL THE TWO SERGEANTS EITHER SIDE OF THE MAJOR. DON'T ARGUE.
I ORDER YOU TO OBEY ME!
REID . . . STURROCK — NOW!

REID AND STURROCK DID EXACTLY AS THEY WERE TOLD.

YOU SAW THEIR EYES . . . MAD. THEY'VE BEEN HIT BY LOBOTOMY GAS. IT DESTROYED THE MIND SO THAT THE AFFECTED BECOME ZOMBIES — THE CARTHANS CONTROL THEM.
NOW MOVE!

USING A HOVTANK THEY HEADED FOR THE RENDEZVOUS POINT.
THERE'S THE RENDEZVOUS.
I CAN SEE A TRANSPORTER . . . READY AND WAITING . . . FOR US!
CARTHAN CRAWLER . . . IF IT SEES US, WE'LL . . .
RUN . . . GET AWAY QUICK!

THE CARTHANS ARE CLOSING . . .
STURROCK, MOVE YOUR BACKSIDE! GET IN THAT TRANSPORT.

HURRY . . . WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT. . . . THAT THING WILL GET US.
NOT IF I GET IT FIRST!

GO . . . GO . . . GO . . .
HE'S CRAZY . . . BUT HE'S GIVEN US THE CHANCE TO GET AWAY.
THEY'RE OFF . . . AAAAARGH!

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Sergeant Wilse T. Force was surly, bad-tempered and hated the war. He wanted out, and the only way he could do that was to obey orders, no matter how difficult they were. His job was complicated by two things . . . a bunch of recruits he had to wetnurse through the Badlands, and an enemy commander who wanted him dead — for personal reasons.

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